

Under reconstruction! We apologize for the absence of certain materials.

UKRAINIAN POLITICAL PARTIES ONE YEAR BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

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According to the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, 126 political parties were registered by the end of March and are now eligible to run for parliament in the 2006 election. The same number of the parties were qualified to take part in the 2002 election, but only half of them - 63 parties - ran in the race.

Similarly, the approaching parliamentary election served a powerful incentive to create new parties: 30 of them were registered during the 2004 and the beginning of 2005, with 22 registered in last three months.

The coming parliamentary campaign will differ significantly from the previous ones.

First, it will be carried out according to a new law.

Second, through inertia, many political parties will be perceived depending on their results in the presidential campaign. Similarly, discussions and political technologies will be the same as during the presidential election.

Third, unlike in the previous campaigns, the government will enjoy stronger public support than the opposition.

Fourth, the current government has declared its devotion to democratic values, whereas the people have learned to stand up for their right for a free election. This provides a chance for free and fair elections.

Fifth, due to the enactment of constitutional amendments, which change Ukraine into a parliamentary republic, the coming elections will be as important as the Presidential one. The Party and Parties In Power

The camp of "pro-governmental" political forces at present includes the parties that supported Viktor Yushchenko in the presidential elections. Some of them (Batkivshchyna, Public Union Our Ukraine, SPU, Reform and Order, Ukrainian Nationalist Party (UNP) and National Rukh of Ukraine (NRU)) make up the new government. All of them have different ideologies, different political weights, and different electoral support. The newly created Public Union Our Ukraine (PUOU) is likely to become a principal political force in this camp. The idea to form this party belongs to Yushchenko, and the organizational and financial tasks are assigned to the Razom parliamentary group, who were the "donors" in the 2002 parliamentary campaign and in the 2004 presidential campaign. Yushchenko's stably high popularity rating, which is a "driving force" for the party, was the underlying reason for its creation.

Nevertheless, there has not been a positive trend towards amalgamation of all the democratic forces which were a part of the Our Ukraine pre-election block, declared back in 2002. We assume that the creation of the PUOU was speeded up after Yushchenko's victory not only due to the need to meet the deadline but also due to the President's personal sensitivity to the unwillingness of the UNP and NRU to join the union.

Now, regional organizations of the PUOU are being created; these organizations are being eagerly watched by both the representatives of the Our Ukraine bloc parties and by those supporting [Yushchenko's rival] Yanukovich in the presidential election. In the long run, this could cause the PUOU the same problems which the National Democratic Party (NDP) had in the past and which the Party of Regions had recently.

The PUOU deliberately refused a clear ideological course and adopted a model of a "party for all". Its strategic goal is to "implement the mission of the new President, which is to make the life of people respectable and safe and to make Ukraine strong and wealthy." Its association with the President is a significant challenge for the PUOU. On the one hand it is an electoral advantage, but on the other, the extremely high level of public expectations of the President could be a reason for deep disappointment. **Currently it is most advantageous for the Public Union Our Ukraine to run for parliament independently.** The party would get the support of 29.5% of the voters, declared according to data from the poll. (Hereafter we cite the results of the nationwide poll of 2012 people above 18 conducted from February 23 to 28, 2005. The results have a margin of error that does not exceed 2.3%.)

Yushchenko's party would be supported by 54.3% of the voters, who supported him in the presidential election. Only 1.2% of his voters would support the NRU, and just 0.3% would vote for the UNP. Thus the PUOU would not get any electoral advantage if it blocked with the NRU and UNP. At the same time, at the PUOU constituent congress, Yushchenko declared the possibility of a political coalition. He also stated his disappointment with the positions of the NRU and UNP and spoke about the possibility of creating a coalition with other parties - the Tymoshenko-led Batkivshchyna and the People's Party lead by Volodymyr Lytvyn. This coalition would not include the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Ukraine, according to the statement of its leader, A.Kinakh. **The creation of an election bloc according to the 2002 model is rather doubtful.** Certain heads of the PUOU organizing committee have made it clear that there will be no election bloc that would include Yushchenko's party and the NRU and UNP. The Yushchenko vehicle would not be able "to draw" them, and they would have to look for other options, although the NRU leadership still can't believe this.

The PUOU has a good chance of winning the election, and it does not really need any allies. It is politically advisable for it to run the election campaign independently. At the same time, it is hard to imagine that Yushchenko would give up the idea of further "consolidation" before the election.

The Batkivshchyna party lead by the Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko is now facing several different options of participation in the election. First, the party can independently overcome the election threshold - 5.3% of the voters would cast their votes for it. At the same time, Tymoshenko's personal popularity rating (41.5% unconditionally approve all of her actions) is significantly higher than that of her party, since most of her supporters give preference to Yushchenko's party.

Batkivshchyna reinforced its positions after party the Yabluko, which is a most active and creative party, recently joined it.

The achievements and mistakes of the new government could also have a serious influence on the approval rating of Batkivshchyna. Fulfillment of the amendments to the 2005 budget adopted by the new government could become a good basis for its election campaign.

If Batkivshchyna runs in the election independently, it will be able to distance itself from the President, and form its election list independently, whereas in the new parliament it could try to play its own independent game during the appointment of the Cabinet.

At the same time the President has made a proposal to Batkivshchyna, which is very difficult to turn down. He proposed defining a pro-governmental election coalition, and supposedly defining a general election list.

On the one hand, this is a very good proposal, since it gives the party a chance to get its representatives to parliament with less resources. On the other hand, participation in the coalition infringes upon the right to lead an independent game, and reduces the number of the future seats in parliament. Moreover, Poroshenko being among the party leaders reduces Tymoshenko's chance to get the Prime Minister's seat for the second time, this time with the greater authority.

Participation in the coalition also restrains Tymoshenko's position as a potential presidential candidate. Although she is currently declaring a principle of "to a second term with Yushchenko", it cannot be ruled out that she has a wish to test herself in a presidential race sooner than that.

Batkivshchyna's third option is to become the center for the creation of its own election block in the pro-governmental plane. Most analysts see it as a right-wing party in coalition with the UNP and NRU. Some of them, on the contrary, allow the possibility of it forming a bloc with the Socialist Party. But what is actually going on now is a slow movement of Batkivshchyna towards the political center.

There is also the last, rather controversial option, which, however, may not be overlooked. It is the Tymoshenko-led Batkivshchyna going into opposition. Thus the intensification of the struggle between the key figures of the new government could lead to Tymoshenko's ousting from the Prime Minister's post. Then it would be logical if her party went into opposition and built its campaign on the thesis "we were in power, but we were not allowed to do anything; now we are going into power to fulfill the commitments we undertook during the Orange Revolution." Assuming the role of a "pro-governmental party" may have become most difficult for the Socialist Party of Ukraine. This is suggested by the fact that the party leader, Oleksandr Moroz, has distanced himself from the governmental bodies, whereas the appointments of the party's influential representatives Lutsenko and Mykolayenko to ministerial positions withdrew them from the decision-making center of the party. As a result, the "party's gray cardinal," Vinsky, has increased his influence and publishes the party's plans concerning its participation in the elections.

The statements of party leader Moroz haven't made it any clearer whether the socialist party is in power or in opposition. The socialists have all the reasons to be dissatisfied with the appointments in the new government, yet some of their coalition partners say that the SPU has always managed to get more than the others and be dissatisfied with it.

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If SPU ran in the elections independently, it would gain 4.2% of the vote and pass the threshold. For the time being, the socialists consider two possibilities: either to run for parliament independently, or to create a bloc in which they would play the leading role, while their other partners would serve as mere decoration. The SPU has started pooling its resources; such conclusion could be drawn based on the analysis of the list of newly accepted socialist faction members. This also suggests that the SPU would like to take part in the election as a self-sufficient party and dictate its own conditions in case of creation of a bloc. Thus, of all the pro-governmental forces, three stand a good chance of overcoming the election threshold and getting 40% of the vote as a total. They could get up to three thirds of the parliamentary seats. This would ensure the creation of a pro-governmental parliamentary majority, even if any of its "smaller" partners would not join it. "The neutral land"

In a situation in which major political forces have split along the line of resistance of two presidential candidates, a niche has appeared for the parties whose leaders did not take part in the elections and who now claim the role of the "third force" or that of "peace keepers".

The People's Party of Ukraine (PPU), led by Verkhovna Rada Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn is the major force in this segment. The role that the Verkhovna Rada, and Lytvyn personally played in settling the political crises after the second round of the presidential election affords Lytvyn the ground to claim status of a leader of this "neutral" force.

The Lytvyn-led People's Party still targets its traditional voters - the agrarian officials and farmers influenced by them. However, the change of the name means the intention of PPU leader to exceed the traditional limits. Attempts are being made to increase the financial resources of the party; and new business circles are being attracted to it.

At present, the PPU still lacks the votes to overcome the three percent threshold (it is currently supported by 1.8% of the voters), but considering the personal popularity of the party head and the process of concentration of a part of political elite around him it can count on victory. As for determining its position on the "government - opposition" plane, the PPU has several different options. Thus, its leader has repeatedly stated his support of the newly-elected President, whereas Yushchenko named PPU among the participants of the coalition headed by the PUOU. At the same time, both sides have reservations of their own. Thus Lytvyn has the shadow of the cassette scandal, which is being actively exploited by the SPU and which may not be approved by some of the PUOU supporters against the background of Yushchenko's promise to conclude the Gongadze case.

On the other hand, the PPU cannot be satisfied with some of the recent government's moves, such as reducing the export duty for agricultural produce. We can forecast some more similar reasons for conflict in the future. A block with the PUOU entails all the negative aspects of the status of pro-governmental party and deprives it of the opportunity to position itself as an alternative to both the government and the opposition. That is why it is more likely that the PPU will not take part in the block with the PUOU.

We can forecast that the United Ukraine party, led by Hubsyky, will join the PUOU, although his latest statements show that the party is considering the option of its independent participation in the election.

Pora, which was created as a party of the ideas of Maidan and a revolutionary censor for the government, could have claimed a special role in these elections. But it was not registered in time, due to falsification of the signatures in its support, according to Justice Minister Zvarych. Such an attitude towards this party could be regarded as the wish of the government to prevent its "orange" competitor from participating in the election.

None of the parties of this stream, except for the PPU, now has serious political prospects, but there is still some time for these prospects to emerge. The reasons could be serious mistakes or even failures of the new government, and public disappointment in it. The Labyrinths of the Opposition

After the 2004 presidential election, the government and opposition in Ukraine have switched places. That is why it would be logical to forecast the creation of a so-called "new opposition" that would include the Social Democratic United Party, the Party of the Regions and Labor Ukraine.

It happened so formally, yet with many discussions and problems. However, all of these parties still face the question of what exactly they oppose. Thus, during voting on amendments to the 2005 budget in the Verkhovna Rada, all of these parties supported them and thus shared the responsibility for the actions of the "alien" Cabinet. At the same time, it is quite clear that the less time is left before the election the more oppositional they will be.

Ukrainian society is still very tolerant of the opposition: two thirds of those polled believe that the opposition is essential, that is why the state must guarantee its rights. It is significant that this opinion is supported by two-thirds of supporters of the new government - those who supported Yushchenko in the presidential election. The Party of the Regions is currently second popular party after the PUOU - 17 % of the voters are ready to support it in the election. One of its founders, people's deputy Rybak, strongly refuted the possibility of its going into opposition and said that none of the party leaders was ready for this move. Some of the other party members supported him - representatives of business were afraid that the new government would act towards them the same way as the old government did towards the previous opposition.

Yet immediately after the official announcement of the results of the presidential election, Yanukovich said that the party's place is in the opposition, and in early March the VII congress of the party adopted a decision concerning going into opposition. At present the party of Yanukovich is the most promising opposition force, which is why it is quite possible for it to run for parliament independently. It is does not seriously considering the possibility of blocking with SDPU (u) or of creating an "opposition coalition". Everything depends on Yanukovich's keeping his popularity gained during the presidential election and on keeping its voters from supporting other opposition forces. The SDPU (u)'s entry into opposition was accompanied by a decrease in the number of its parliamentary faction, from 40 to 21 deputies, as well as a withdrawal of its ordinary party members. At the same time, its leader Viktor Medvedchuk said that the decision on going into opposition was unanimously adopted at 17 regional party conferences.

The current support of the SDPU (u) is three times less than the threshold - it is supported by only one percent of the voters. However, it has powerful media, a well-developed organizational structure and finance, and so it is capable of changing the situation. Now social democrats are criticizing the actions of the new government most logically and steadily of all parties. The Labor Ukraine party is currently almost invisible on the political arena. Its most active figure, Oleksandra Kuzhel, is trying to compensate for the prolonged absence of its leader, Tyhypko, but the party is supported now only by 0.3% of the voters.

The other parties, who turned out in the opposition due to the defeat of Yanukovich at the presidential election - New Democracy and The State - occupy the "federalist" niche. They advocate relations with Russia and higher status of the Russian language. They are not known to the voters yet, but may possibly become "bricks" for the construction of a future bloc.

We can forecast that these parties will become the center of attraction to dismissed civil servants and businessmen, deprived of their protection in state bodies, in other words, those who enjoyed the special preferences of the previous regime and are now deprived of it.

Active support of Yanukovich by the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, led by Nataliya Vitrenko, resulted in an actual reanimation of this party. It is currently supported by 2.8% of the voters, and competes with the Communist Party of Ukraine and with the Party of Regions. Similarly, the presidential campaign contributed to the popularity of Korchynsky's Fellowship, but it is now supported only 0.4% of the voters.

In theory, it is possible that a so-called "broad oppositional coalition" could be created from the Party of Regions, SDPU (u), Labor Ukraine, the Progressive Socialist Party and the Fellowship, but the prospects are rather vague. The Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) traditionally claims the role of the "only true and ideologically consistent" opposition. At the same time, it is now losing its position and is only supported by 5.3% of the voters, which brings the party down from its traditional second (and recently first) place to third, with only 0.5% advantage over the SPU, which is rated fourth.

In conclusion we would like to mention that the forces which are currently in the opposition, might obtain more than one third of the seats in the parliament, with the non-leftist parties prevailing in this number. The Risks and The Threats of the Future Campaign

The approaching parliamentary campaign may open new prospects for Ukraine. First, the very fact of fair and transparent elections to the Verkhovna Rada (should they be such) will have a positive effect on the society and the image of Ukraine with the international community.

An efficient and democratic parliament may be elected, with clear differentiation between the majority and the opposition, which is also essential for civilized political processes.

At the same time this campaign may have certain risks and threats.

In our view, the major threat is a deepening of the social and political split of the society that took place during the presidential election. 44% of citizens acknowledge the split of society, while 40% deny it. 82% of those who voted for Yushchenko consider current developments in Ukraine positive, but this opinion is shared, by only 17% of the supporters of Yanukovich.

This split could be increased as a result of discussions of controversial topics arising from the presidential campaign. For the pro-governmental forces, these topics include the "disclosure of crimes" of the previous regime and its specific representatives, "the fight with oligarchs", and demonstrative punishment of

those who were involved in corruption and falsification of the election results. The “fight with the past” could turn into a campaign against the opposition to the new government in general.

The opposition, in its turn, may actively exploit the topics of “political repressions” against its supporters, raising of the status of the Russian language and priority of relations with Russia and SES. Some of the topics raised by the radical opposition may intensify interregional, international and interreligious disagreements, as well as increase in anti-Western, especially anti-American sentiments. Traditionally the efficiency of parliament declines during election campaigns due to its inclination to adopt populist decisions, and worsening of relations between parliament, government and the President. **Another risk is the use by the new government of the same methods that the old government used.** People say that administrative pressure was used during the creation of the party People's Union Our Ukraine. If such facts are confirmed, and moreover, if administrative pressure is used during the election campaign, there will be a deep disappointment with the Orange Revolution. This will also aggravate the situation in the regions, where the opposition enjoys more popular support and may lead to non-recognition of the election results similar to the Miadan. The international image of Ukraine will be marred and the Council of Europe will not stop its monitoring.

Among the threats that could be posed by the actions of the new government and parliament is the violation of conditions of the political compromises reached during the Orange Revolution. This refers to the attempts to block constitutional reform and to change the key parameters of the elections system, for example, to raise the required threshold significantly.

The adopted election law also poses certain threats, the most significant of which are the threat of the conservation of the Verkhovna Rada and small representation of the regions in parliament, lack of ties between voters and their deputies and lack of influence on them, and dictatorship of party leaders over the elected deputies. In addition, the election law inherited all the drawbacks of the law on election of the President of Ukraine. These include the formation of the voter list, voting outside of polling stations and absentee votes.

Finally, there are certain external risks. In particular, Russia, which, according to most experts, lost the presidential election, might make an attempt to gain revenge.

It depends on all the political forces planning on participating in the election campaign, whether it is possible to avoid these risks and threats. The experience of the 2004 election testifies that by far not all of the political parties are ready to assume this responsibility.

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